

REMARKS

As set forth above, the Applicants canceled claims 17-20, amended claims 1-2, 5-10, and 15-16, and added new claims 21-34. These amendments do not add any new matter to the originally filed specification of the parent application. In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, the Applicants also believe the pending claims 1-16 and 21-34 to be patentably distinct from the prior art and in condition for allowance.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

In an Office Action mailed January 23, 2003 in the parent application, the Examiner rejected claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner identified the limitation “the mechanical latch” as lacking antecedent basis in claim 1. The foregoing amendments are believed to clarify this limitation as “the latch member,” thereby correcting the antecedent basis of this term. Accordingly, the Applicants preemptively request withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

In the foregoing Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 1, 7, 9-10, and 15-16 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Rynders et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,520,069). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As amended above, independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a “release member comprises a grip configured for *bending* the release member *to effectuate a movement of the latch member* to a released position.” The Rynders et al. reference is absolutely devoid of anything remotely suggestive of bending to effectuate movement of a latch member, as recited in the instant claim. In sharp contrast, the cited references discloses “levers 3a and 3b of a lever mechanism 3 having proximal ends 3a1, 3b1 which have fixed pivotal mounts 3a2 which are pivotally attached at spaced locations on a common support.” Col. 2, lines 63-66. As illustrated and described, the levers 3a and 3b *rotate* about the fixed pivotal mounts 3a2 and 3b2 rather than bending, as recited in the

instant claim. *See* Col. 2, lines 63-66; Col. 3, lines 33-42. Accordingly, the cited reference fails to disclose each and every element of the instant claims.

Turning to independent claim 10, the amended claim recites, *inter alia*, a “*bowable* and *graspable* release member.” Again, the Rynders et al. reference is absolutely devoid of anything remotely suggestive of bowing, or a bowable and graspable release member, as recited in the instant claim. As discussed above, the cited references discloses “levers 3a and 3b of a lever mechanism 3 having proximal ends 3a1, 3b1 which have fixed pivotal mounts 3a2 which are pivotally attached at spaced locations on a common support.” Col. 2, lines 63-66. Although the levers 3a and 3b have arcuate sectors 3a4 and 3b4, the levers 3a and 3b never change form in a bowable manner. *See* Col. 3, lines 7-10. Instead, the levers 3a and 3b simply *rotate* about the fixed pivotal mounts 3a2 and 3b2. *See* Col. 2, lines 63-66; Col. 3, lines 33-42. Accordingly, the cited reference fails to disclose each and every element of the instant claims.

For these reasons, the Applicants preemptively request withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In the foregoing Office Action, the Examiner further rejected dependent claims 11-14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). Specifically, the Examiner rejected claim 11 as being unpatentable over Rynders et al. in view of Abdel-Rahman et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,248,158), the Examiner rejected claim 12 as being unpatentable over Rynders et al. in view of Friedman et al. (US 2002/0167829), and the Examiner rejected claims 13-14 as being unpatentable over Rynders et al. in view of Lundell et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,889,859). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. As discussed above, the primary reference does not teach or suggest each and every feature of the independent claims. In addition, the foregoing secondary references do not obviate the deficiencies of the primary reference. Accordingly, the Applicants preemptively request withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

New Claims

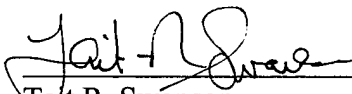
As set forth above, each of the new claims recites features missing from the references cited by the Examiner in the Office Action mailed January 23, 2003 in the parent application. For example, independent claim 21 recites, *inter alia*, a “*bending-activated release* coupled to the tool-free coupling and configured to move the tool-free coupling between the latched and released positions.” Independent claim 27 recites, *inter alia*, “providing a *flex-activated release* operable at an accessible side of the device to facilitate disengagement of the tool-free coupling.” As discussed above, the Rynders et al. reference discloses levers 3a and 3b having arcuate sectors 3a4 and 3b4 and fixed pivotal mounts 3a2 and 3b2, which facilitate rotation of the levers 3a and 3b. *See* Col. 3, lines 7-10. However, the levers 3a and 3b are neither bending-activated nor flex-activated, as recited in the instant claims. The remaining references cited by the Examiner also fail to teach such features. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully stress that the foregoing new claims 21 and 27 and their respective dependent claims are patentable over the cited references and in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

The Applicants respectfully request allowance of all pending claims. If the Examiner believes certain amendments are necessary to clarify the present claims or if the Examiner wishes to resolve any other issues by way of a telephone conference, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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